Druze

Demographics

- Around 800,000 worldwide
- The traditional homeland of the Druze is in the Levant, with some western diaspora
- The language of the Druze is Levantine Arabic

Origin

- Druze originated as an offshoot of Ismaili Islam, despite hostility towards Ismailis baked into Druze theology, virtually every aspect of the Druze faith can be traced back to existing trends within Ismailism
  - One of the fundamental doctrines within Ismailism is the distinction between zahir and batin, that every commandment within the Quran and sunnah is a parable with inner meanings and that acting upon the inner meaning is superior
    - Some extreme Ismailis viewed the zahir acts as a punishment for non-Ismailis
  - Two important changes in later development of Ismailism
    - Introduction of Neoplatonic philosophy
    - Theory of imamate
      - In the early days it was believed that each natiq was followed by an asas and a line of imams, ending in Muhammad ibn Ismaili who had disappeared but a Mahdi (likely ibn Ismail himself) was awaited
      - Fatimids changed doctrine as they claimed to be imams

Beliefs

- The core of the Druze religion, also called Din al-Tawhid, is the divinity of Al-Hakim, the sixth Fatimid caliph
  - Al-Hakim's own views on this deification are mixed
    - Ismailis claim he disapproved of it
    - Al-Antaki claimed he only condemned it when trouble arose, and that he had a friendship for Hamza and ceased to perform religious duties
    - Ibn Zafir claims it was Al-Hakim who first preached the doctrines himself
    - Al-Hakim gave support to some Druze da'is
- Another central doctrine is that previous religions were sent as a punishment to humanity
  - In particular, Isma'ili and Sunni Islam are singled out for hatred as they were viewed as representative of batin and zahir respectively, both equally vain and superseded by tawhid
- In the beginning was God, who created the 'Aql Al-Kulli (Universal Intelligence)
  - The 'Aql became proud and this led to the appearance of the Didd (the Opposing Principle)
  - The hudud proceeded from the 'Aql, including the Nafs Al-Kulliyya (Universal Soul), Kalima (Word), Sabiq (Preceding), Tali (The Follower)
    - From the Tali came the earth, heavens, etc.
  - Out of the Didd proceeded powers of darkness in opposition to the hudud
- There was a period of 343 million years between the appearance of the hudud and the creation of man
- The first appearance of God as a man in the human era was as Al-Bar
  - The hudud and didd also took on human form
    - 'Aql: Adam/Shatnil
    - Nafs: Akhnukh
    - Kalima: Sharkh
    - Didd: Iblis/Harat
- Most people inclined to polytheism and finally Al-Bar withdrew and punished humanity with different Shari'as
  - He would not appear as a man again until the second Fatimid caliph Al-Qa'im and the next several up to Al-Hakim
  - In an explicitly anti-Islamic reference, the false hudud of the time of the Prophet ﷺ are considered by Druze to be the Prophet ﷺ himself as well as the four righteous caliphs
    - They consider the 'Aql as Salman Al-Farsi and Nafs as Al-Miqdad
      - Abu Talib is considered another incarnation of the 'Aql, with his relationship to Muhammad ﷺ and Ali being denied by Druze
    - Hostility towards Islam increases throughout the years in Druze texts, with earlier ones being relatively mild
  - Druze view each natiq (Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, Muhammad ﷺ) as abrogating their preceding religions but with an equally vain one
- Al-Hakim's disappearance was also seen as a punishment for evil deeds
  - Acting through his Imam, Hamza, he would bring about the triumph of tawhid and subjugation of non-Druze
- Reincarnation is affirmed
  - No paradise or hell, the Muwahhidun/Druze will inherit the earth with the rest of humanity as their servants

- Taqiyya is practiced
- Despite the claim that God appeared in human form, Hamza still stressed the complete incomprehensibility of God's true divine nature
- God in Druze works is usually referred to by the names of his incarnations on earth, especially Al-Bar and al-Hakim
- Druze are separated into two categories: the 'uqqal and the juhhal, with many religious texts only being available to the former
- With the abolition of the zahir and batin and triumph of tawhid, this also abolishes religious practices such as prayer or fasting

Texts

- The Quran, Bible, and Majalis are all referenced in Druze texts, with an ambivalent attitude
  - These texts are selectively used and interpreted to promote Druze doctrine, but as a whole are seen as texts of false religions
- Druze writings
  - The collection of canonical scriptures (Epistles)
  - Glosses explaining these scriptures
  - Commentaries of scriptures by later scholars
  - Non-canonical writings expanding on philosophical ideas
  - Apocryphal writings attributed to ministers
  - All of the former are available only to 'uqqal
  - Misc. writings include catechisms, prayers, and sermons as well as secular writings such as poems

Summary of Epistles

I: Written after the disappearance of Al-Hakim. He is portrayed as a protector of Islam but the people angered him and in return he punished them with a variety of restrictions and his disappearance. Only pertinence can make him return.

II: Forbidding alcoholic drinks.

III: Discussions between al-Hakim and Jews/Christians. The Jews/Christians complain of their suffering which is contrary to what the Prophet ﷺ prescribed (that they could practice their religion if they paid jizya). Al-Hakim claims that the Prophet's ﷺ promise lasted only for 400 years and that if after this time period the promised prophet (Paraclete) did not come, the Imam of the time would have the choice of conversion or persecution.

IV: The Qarmatian writes to Al-Hakim with promises of safety, Al-Hakim replies he has no need for this promise and that he will be defeated.

V: Mithaq, oath taken by converts.

VI: First written only for a Druze audience. Abolishes all precepts of Islam in both the outward/zahir and inner/batin sense. Must be kept secret until they are triumphant over the rest of humanity. All that the believers need to do is confess the sole divinity of Al-Hakim and submit to his commands.

VII: Recalls previous epistle's abolition of pillars of Islam and criticism of some Ismaili ideas.

VIII: Formula of initiation for women.

IX: Establishes the divinity of Al-Hakim and shows that the names applied to him actually apply to his ministers. Proclaims that Sunnis, Ismailis, and apostates will pay a tax and wear special clothes.

X: Addressed at apostates, reproaching them for breaking their oathes and proclaims how the faith will prevail over all others.

XI: Explaining mad actions of al-Hakim by giving them allegorical interpretations. Affirms that he does not sleep or walk.

XII: Gives a history. Claims Adam (AS) was not created from dust or without parents but instead there's three Adams all born normally.

Adam al-Safa (aka Shatnil) is the incarnation of the ‘Aql who has appeared in previous eras but this time was born in India as a doctor. He called the people to Tawhid, half obeyed. Al-Bar, the first incarnation of God in this cycle, ordered the angels/da’is to obey Adam. Harat/Iblis refused. Shatnil and his wife/hujja organized his ministers and ordered his followers to not mix with Iblis and the jinn.

Adam the Rebellious (aka Akhnukh) and Adam the Forgetful (aka Shi’t) were the two chief hujjas of twelve that Adam al-Safa appointed. Akhnukh was persuaded to eat of the tree by al-Habbal, a ma’dhun of Iblis. After losing their rank and many years of repentance, Shatnil asked al-Bar to forgive them.

In anger at the people’s inclination towards polytheism, al-Bar sent a series of Natiqs with a legalistic shari’a: Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, (peace be upon them), Muhammad ﷺ , and Muhammad ibn Ismail. Muhammad ibn Ismail sealed and ended the sharias and was succeeded by three Caliphs, theee Imams, and finally the Mandi. Then God revealed himself again as al-Qa’im, al-Mu’tazili, al-‘Aziz, and al-Hakim.

XIII: Formation and hierarchy of the Hudud. God created ‘Aql from his own light and gave him complete power. ‘Aql became proud and wanted a rival and then begged for help against the Rival so God created the Nafs. Mentions of reincarnation.

XIV: Explanation of creations (‘Aql, Nafs, Kalima, Sabiq, Tali) that were created from the light, as well as allegorical explanations of natural phenomena and Islamic concepts and reaffirming the impossibility of understanding the Godhead.

XV: Criticism of the Nusayris for polytheism, metapsychosis, and various illicit practices such as adultery and incest, as well as their belief that man is formed in his mother’s womb and belief of transmigration of souls into animals.

XVI: The reason for the closing of da’wa (in 409 AH) was because of their lack of faith when offered the chance of accepting the faith and their disobedience to commandments.

XVII: Praise of al-Hakim and impossibility of assigning attributes to him. Explains how every minister in the da’wa of Tawhid has an opposite number in the da’wa of polytheism.

XVIII: Interpretation of Majalis al-Hikma.

XIX: Hamza, in prison, prays for a right understanding of the nature of al-Hakim. Information about apostates and clashes are given.

XX: Appointment of Abu Ibrahim Ismail ibn Muhammad al-Tamimi to the rank of Dhu Massa, second of the hudud.

XXI: Appointment of Abu ‘Abdullah Muhammad ibn Wahab al-Qurashi to the rank of Kalima, third of the hudud.

XXII: Appointment of al-Sammuqi to Tali, fifth of the hudud.

XXIII: Letter from Hamza giving instructions about how to send letters to him.

XXIV: Another letter encouraging people in their faith.

XXV: Marriage and divorce laws. Property is shared equally. Four types of divorce: wife leaves husband and husband is innocent (he takes half her property), if he treats her violence (she may take all her own property), husband divorces due to disobedient wife (he takes half her property), husband divorces without cause (she takes half his property).

XXVI: Letter from Hamza to the heir of the throne telling him to stop claiming any relationship with al-Hakim.

XXVII: Letter from Hamza to the supposed brother of al-Hakim, calling him Iblis and Harat and telling him to give up his claim to avoid a terrible fate.

XVIII: Letter to Qadi al-Qudat from Hamza, telling him he has no jurisdiction over the community.

XXIX: Hymn of praise for al-Hakim.

XXX: Prayer to al-Hakim.

XXXI: Another prayer to al-Hakim.

XXXII: List of names, ranks, and titles of the five higher hudud.

XXXIII: Hamza tells the believers they will gain the wealth, wives, and children of the unbelievers, and to not reveal the hikma to people unworthy of it.

XXXIV: Hamza admonishes some followers for being tempted by false leaders and prophesies his own reappearance.

XXXV: Believers are told to submit to al-Hakim and carry out the promises they agreed to in the Mithaq, and that the triumph of Tawhid is close.

XXXVI: Gives divisions of knowledge. Zahir is upheld by the natiqs, and is a punishment for men. Batin is upheld by the Asas and points to the Rahma. Third and fourth are likely animal and human medicine. Fifth is the only true one, knowledge of the Unity of the Lord. Re-iteration of the natiq and asas timeline.

XXXVII: Allegorical explanation of various Quranic verses as well as the nature of man.

XXXVIII: Comparing the five hidden essences that make up Tawhid to a candle, as well as claiming that one cannot be a Unitarian if they cleave to the Zahir or Batin. Claims that God created everything in pairs except for Tawhid.

XXXIX: Another description of the ‘Aql’s creation from the light of al-Hakim followed by the Nafs.

XL: Poem praising al-Hakim.